Unit .35

Session .05

Defending the Faith

Scripture

Jude 3-4, 12-25

3 Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all. **4** For some people, who were designated for this judgment long ago, have come in by stealth; they are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into sensuality and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord. ... **12** These people are dangerous reefs at your love feasts as they eat with you without reverence. They are shepherds who only look after themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by winds; trees in late autumn—fruitless, twice dead and uprooted. **13** They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds; wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever. **14** It was about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied: "Look! The Lord comes with tens of thousands of his holy ones **15** to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly concerning all the ungodly acts that they have done in an ungodly way, and concerning all the harsh things ungodly sinners have said against him." **16** These people are discontented grumblers, living according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage. **17** But you, dear friends, remember what was predicted by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. **18** They told you, "In the end time there will be scoffers living according to their own ungodly desires." **19** These people create divisions and are worldly, not having the Spirit. **20** But you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting expectantly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. **22** Have mercy on those who waver; **23** save others by snatching them from the fire; have mercy on others but with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. **24** Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy, **25** to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Christ protects the gospel through the vigilance of His church.

Remember, this icon means there is a Leader Pack item that goes with the lesson. See Leader Pack for additional instructions.

Option 1

Your students work for a comedy publishing company. The editors want to create a comedy series entitled "How to Spot a ___ in the Wild." The idea is for each comedy troupe (each small group of students) to choose their own word to put in the space, and then to create a comical "guide" to identifying whatever noun they choose. For example, they might do "How to Spot a Jock in the Wild," "How to Spot a Church Kid in the Wild," "How to Spot a Science Fiction Fan in the Wild," or "How to Spot a Video Gamer in the Wild." Their medium could be a short skit, a little song, a poster, or pamphlet guide.

Once they've prepared and shared their guides, ask them, in a large group, how they would spot a false teacher. What would they look for? In today's session, we'll see the need to contend for the faith and how to recognize against whom we need to defend it.

Option 2

Imagine your student group is going to put on a conference called Keeping It Real. The goal of the conference is to help adolescents find and keep real friends. Let your student get into small groups to come up with a contribution to this conference. For example, several of them might "record" (put together a skit showing) a short panel discussion on how to recognize fake friends; others might make posters or table tents about how to be real and how to keep real friends; others might make up slogans, jingles, or little songs to play during the conference; others might make skits showing the difference between real and fake friends. Whatever their minds can think of (and time and resources allow), let them put on to show the difference between having fake and real friends.

Afterward, debrief what themes and patterns they saw. What makes the difference between real and fake friends? What's the best way to make certain we have real friends? Chances are good that the theme of being real ourselves came up. In today's session, we'll be looking for false teachers (as opposed to false friends) and how to respond to them. In particular, we'll see we combat false teachers by "keeping it real": by relying on Jesus' protection, just like we rely on Him for everything in life.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Jude 3-4.

Jude would rather be optimistic, but the seriousness of the problem demands a different tone (v. 3). If they don't "contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all" (v. 3), there may not be much of a shared salvation left to write about. It is urgent that they recognize the threat to the gospel; for despite the fact that false teachers won't prevail in the end—they will be judged (v. 4)—they can still do great damage to the church.

- **What were the false teachers doing to undermine the gospel?**

The false teachers' strategy was to damage the church from within. They disguised themselves as true believers, but were in fact, sheep in wolves clothing, just as Paul warned the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:29-30. They wanted to use the gospel as an excuse for sin, "turning the grace of our God into sensuality" (v. 4).

- **How does misusing the gospel for sin deny Jesus?**

When we twist the message of the gospel into an instrument for sin, we deny the very One who died to free us from sin. The apostle Peter wrote, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). And the apostle Paul wrote, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12). This is the same common salvation and grace that Jude is referring to: a salvation that was purchased by Jesus and that empowers a changed life. To pervert the purpose of salvation into an opportunity for sin is to deny the Savior who made salvation possible.

Read Jude 12-13, 16-19.

Jude described the false teachers with vivid imagery. They had no reverence for God because they live in open sin while claiming the name of Christ. As a result, their lives contradict their image and reputation. They may appear to be one thing on the outside, but internally, they have no spiritual life.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 72, DDG)

5. Authority of Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God's special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity's source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Christ protects the gospel through the vigilance of His church.

Jude 3-4

"The most dangerous teachers are the ones who preach a different Christ but still call him 'Jesus.'"[1]

"The verb 'contend,' not to mention the thrust of this brief letter, shows that this contention is not with unbelievers outside the church, but rather with false teachers within the church."[2]

"Jude asserts that their 'condemnation was written about long ago.' To what is he referring?...The most plausible interpretation of Jude 4 is that the author has in mind ancient Jewish prophecies found in the Scriptures, for these are the examples that he proceeds to list in vv. 5-7, 11. Taken together, they demonstrate that, at least typologically, the judgment that befell certain people in ancient times points to similar judgment falling on those with similar failings in Jude's own day."[3]

"The purpose of the letter is communicated in v. 3. The readers were to contend for the faith that was transmitted to them. Verse 4 provides the reason the admonition in v. 3 was needed. Intruders had entered into the church and threatened the purity of its faith."[4]

1. Phillip Graham Ryken, Twitter post, June 28 2020, 9:44 p.m., https://twitter.com/portiawcollins/status/1277432729928376321
2. D. A. Carson, "Jude," in Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007)
3. Ibid.
4. Thomas R. Schreiner (2012). New American Commentary Vol 37: 1, 2 Peter, Jude. B&H Publishing Group. Retrieved from https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com
5. Gavin Ortlund, "Thoughts on Good, Evil, and Hell," Soliloquium, September 6, 2013, https://gavinortlund.com/2013/09/06/thoughts-on-good-evil-and-hell/.

In Defense (p. 74, DDG)

Jude tells us to have mercy on those who waver in their faith and struggle with doubts (v. 22). This should frame our approach to apologetics in a number of ways. First, apologetics isn't just for the world, but also for those who are in the church. Second, apologetics is as much about how we speak as it is about what we say. If the gospel is about embracing God's grace and mercy, then His ambassadors should embody that message. Third, apologetics must come from a heart that desires to snatch people from the fire (v. 23). Gavin Ortlund says, "What is required is orthodoxy + love."[5] When we are compelled not by a zeal for winning, but a zeal for salvation, we will be able to do apologetics in a way that beautifies the gospel.

TEACHING PLAN

- **What do you think Jude meant when he called false teachers "waterless clouds" and fruitless trees (v. 12)?**

False teachers appear as shepherds, clouds, and trees, but their lives are void of true substance. Shepherds guard the flock, but false teachers are selfish. Clouds hold water, but false teachers are empty. Trees bear fruit, but false teachers are dead and uprooted. This reminds us of Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity" (Matt. 23:27).

- **What are the obvious signs that the false teachers aren't true followers of Jesus?**

Jude gives a list of characteristics that reveal the false teachers' true nature. They grumble and are discontent, arrogant, and self-seeking. But most notably, they "create divisions and are worldly" (v. 19). When a professing believer seeks to divide the body, he is likely not a part of it. A true believer is "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). He uses his influence to bring the church together to accomplish her God-given mission. He neither murmurs nor lives in worldliness. This is why James wrote, "If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, his religion is useless and he deceives himself. Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this…to keep oneself unstained from the world" (Jas. 1:26-27).

Read Jude 20-25.

Contending for the faith certainly involves rejecting what is false and wicked, but it also entails busying ourselves with the work that God has given us. We should not be so focused on false teachers that we forget to live out the faith ourselves. We don't merely put out flames,; we must save those who are in the flames and build up the house.

- **How do these verses show us that faith cannot be lived out by yourself?**

Notice how these instructions are community oriented. Jude addresses the church as a group (v. 20) and calls them to build each other up. They need to help those who aren't strong in their faith and save those who are headed for destruction (vv. 22-23). We each have an obligation to one another. In the church, we are our brothers' keepers.

- **Why can we be confident that our efforts to protect and build up the church will be worth it?**

Our confidence is not in our own wisdom or power, but in the promise of God. Jesus said that His church will prevail (Matt. 16:18). God is able to protect and preserve us to the end (v. 24). Jude began the letter by assuring us that we are "kept for Jesus" (v. 1), and now, he is concluding with this same reminder. This assurance is the ground on which we make our stand for Christ.

6. John Gill, "Jude 1 Commentary - John Gill's Exposition on the Whole Bible," StudyLight.org, 1999, https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/jude-1.html.
7. John Piper, "Contend for the Faith," Desiring God, November 25, 1984, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/contend-for-the-faith.
8. John Newton, The Works of John Newton, Volume 6 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2015)

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Christ protects the gospel through the vigilance of His church.

Jude 12-13, 16-19

"They are compared to…clouds 'without water,' because destitute of the true grace of God, and of true evangelical doctrine; which, like rain, is from above, from heaven; and which, like that, refreshes, softens, and fructifies. Now these false teachers looked like clouds, that promised rain, boasted of Gospel light and knowledge, but were destitute of it."[6]

Jude 20-25

"The assured victory of the believing church does not mean that we don't have to fight to win… God's way, as we see it in Jude, is to give his people confidence that their faith will be victorious in the end (in verses 1 and 24) and then to send them out to fight for it."[7]

"The present state may be summed up in two sentences: 'The Lord is gracious. And Satan is busy.'"[8]

Activity

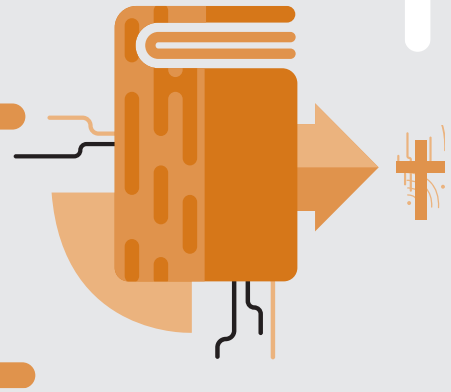
Break your students into pairs. Each pair should come up with a false teaching. It could be a false teaching that has already shown up in church history or they could be new and made-up false teachings.

Once everyone has come up with a new false teaching, they should "hand off" their false teaching to the pair to their left. Now that each group has a new false teaching, they should prepare a short role play. In it, one person will role play a false teacher holding to whatever false doctrine they just got assigned. The other person should role play a genuine Christian responding to that false teacher. The responder should keep in mind the ideas from the session: for example, to confront the false teacher appropriately depending on the temperament of the people and the severity of the false teaching. They should also bear in mind what it would look like to rely on Jesus' protection against false teachers; in other words, what true doctrine should they be leaning on in scripture in order to respond to the false doctrine put forward?

Discuss what attitudes were most helpful and what strategies could be most effective in our world today. For example, how will students know when they should flee and not even engage with the false teacher, when they should openly confront the false teacher, and when they should lovingly instruct and correct the false teacher (cf. Jude 1:22-23). One hint: in this situation, what would Jesus do?

(p. 73, DDG) Christ Connection

Jude warned the early Christians about people who would create division by teaching false doctrine and engaging in sinful behavior. Jesus is the One who protects His people from stumbling and who will enable us to stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy.



DEFENDING THE FAITH

Christ protects the gospel through the vigilance of His Church.

JESUS CONNECTION

Jude warned the early disciples of Jesus that some people would create division in the Church through false teaching and sinful living. Jesus will protect His people from stumbling and enable us to stand in His presence blameless and with great joy.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

DISCERNMENT – Being able to recognize what is true and false or right and wrong.

HEAD

What word pictures does Jude use to describe the false prophets?

How should Jesus' followers live in the midst of false prophets?

HEART

Jude warned us to watch out for teachers who did not live or teach the truth about Jesus. Does this mean that we should be suspicious of every Bible teacher? How can we know whom to listen to and whom to avoid?

Discernment requires knowing what is true from what is false, but how we engage with others about what is true matters. What are the right and wrong ways to discuss what is true and false, right and wrong?

HANDS

Discernment is an important skill so that we recognize truth from falsehood and right from wrong. But only God sees truth and rightness perfectly. Being discerning should not mean building an echo chamber—only listening or talking to people who already agree with you. To discern, we need to be open to conversations with people who think or believe differently and then compare those ideas to what the Bible says. Choose to do one of the following this week:

- Read, talk about or listen to an idea you don't already agree with
- Engage with people who are on "the other side" of an issue from you. Discuss their point of view respectfully.
- Compare some of your ideas on how to think and live to what the Bible says. If you have trouble learning what the Bible says on a specific topic, ask your LifeWise teacher, pastor or youth pastor.